

Media Advisory

from the South Carolina Forestry Commission



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Approach of windy, dry weather brings elevated risk of wildfire

COLUMBIA—South Carolina Forestry Commission officials are cautioning the public to be especially vigilant against wildfire as a strong cold front moves across the state today, bringing with it higher winds and even drier air.

The incoming dry air mass, combined with gusts up to 25 mph, will increase the wildfire danger in much of the state, especially in the northern half, which is already experiencing a moderate drought. The low relative humidity associated with the rapidly moving front is of particular concern, as it will cause fine fuels like grass, straw, and leaves to dry out even more. The dry fuels combined with the expected winds will lead to much greater potential for outdoor fires to escape easily and spread rapidly Wednesday and Thursday.

SCFC Fire Chief Darryl Jones recommends postponing any planned outdoor debris burns until the current conditions abate. “This is a busy time of year for burning, especially in more rural areas, with people cleaning up their yards from all the leaves and branches falling,” he said. “But with the lack of rain we’ve had, the sudden drop in relative humidity and especially the increased winds in the forecast, we really want people to be as safe as possible, preferably holding off burning for the next couple of days.”

Officials from the only agency responsible for wildfire suppression in all unincorporated areas of the state are reminding the public that most wildfires are largely preventable when the proper precautions are taken. In addition to notifying the Forestry Commission before conducting any outdoor burning, those precautions include creating an adequate firebreak around the area to be burned and having enough personnel, water and equipment on hand to keep the fire under control at all times. Not burning when conditions are hazardous is also a proper precaution.

State law requires that citizens in unincorporated areas notify the Forestry Commission before burning outdoors. The notification is a quick, easy, automated process, and the toll-free numbers for each county are provided at the link below:

scfc.gov/protection/fire-burning/how-to-notify/

Did you know...?

An astounding 98 percent of all wildland fires are caused by human activities, and escaped debris burns are responsible for nearly 50 percent of them. South Carolina Forestry Commission firefighters respond to an average of 1,400 wildland fires every year, burning about 10,000 acres annually.

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As the only state agency responsible for wildfire suppression in all unincorporated areas of the state, the South Carolina Forestry Commission protects 13.6 million acres from wildland fire. More than 500 county, municipal and volunteer fire departments operate more than 1,100 fire stations in South Carolina. The Forestry Commission cooperates with these departments to prevent and control structural and wildland fires, employing highly trained firefighters and specialized equipment when fires burn into forested areas that are difficult to reach.